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Vincennes In Its Relation to French Colonial Policy

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The opening of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of the struggle between the English and the French for control of the Mississippi valley. The French had extended their posts the whole length of the river, but the English were threatening their hold by advancing upon the headwaters of the great rivers flowing westward from the Alleghanies. The Carolinians had descended the Tennessee to its southern most bend and had then journeyed down the Alabama to the gulf. They had supplied the Chickasaws with arms and thus won their friendship and together these redmen and whites had enslaved other Indians who still had to rely upon their native weapons.¹

Farther to the north the English were moving down the Ohio. In 1700 traders from Carolina and Virginia, apparently by way of the Cumberland (Quas quem), had reached the Mississippi and established themselves among the Arkansas Indians at Cappa near the mouth of the St. Frances river. Iberville declared that these men were operating under orders

*A partial translation of the notes is furnished so the American reader can make out their meaning. The author is not responsible for these.

¹ Iberville wrote shortly after 1700 concerning the English: "Il y a plusieurs années qu'ils se sont placés aux Chicacha qu'ils ont armez de fusils ausquels ils se joignent et font des courses sur les autres nations qu'ils font esclaves." Several years ago they joined (?) the Chickasaws whom they armed with guns, with whom they joined and made incursions on the other nations which they enslaved. He added that the English had gone north to the thirty-seventh parallel and south to the thirty-third and descended the Moblle [Alabama] river to the sea. *Memoires Après 1700. Archives Nationales, Colonies*. C 13, C2: 23. Transcript in Library of congress. This memorial by Iberville is typical of many in the French archives.

from English governors and he believed that their coming was the forerunner of larger movements of the English from across the mountains.² In the English colonies, he argued, population was already so dense that it must find an outlet to the west. The newcomers would naturally settle along the Ohio and ally themselves with the Indians whose lands they were invading.³ If this should take place, the English would be in a position to cut the communication between Louisiana and Canada and threaten the integrity of the French colonial empire.

Iberville furthermore pointed out that the *coureurs du bois*, who had come down to the Ohio from Canada to trade, were already selling their furs to the English, whose posts were only three or four hundred leagues away and could be reached without portage. To break up this trade, Iberville proposed drastic measures. At one time he suggested closing all the routes leading from the Ohio country to the English posts.⁴ At another time he proposed to send an army to destroy the English colonies and thus end their encroachments.⁵ He would then establish a post on the "Ouabache" and compel the Indians to trade there or go to Detroit.

Iberville planned this post to check the advances of the French Canadians as well as those of the English. He re-

² "C'est par la Branche de quasquens que sont descendus plusieurs anglois de la Caroline en Virginie qui sont venus S'establir aux Acansa ou Cappa - - - Les anglois qui sont venus S'establir aux Acansa au mois de Mars 1700, estoient venus de la Caroline par la Riviere de Ouabache avec un ordre pour S'establir sur les bords du Mississippy comme estant un pays de la dépendance de l'Angleterre." *Ibid.* It is by a branch of the Cumberland that several English came down from Carolina into Virginia who came to settle at the Acansa or Cappa. The English who came to settle at the Acansa in the month of March 1700, came from Carolina by the Wabash River with an order to settle on the banks of the Mississippi, as being a country of English dependence.

³ Iberville wrote that the English "se joignent a plusieurs Nations d'Indiens comme les quasquens Chaouenons et Loups qui Se Sont establis sur une des branches de la Rivlée Ouabache - - -" *Ibid.* The English joined with several tribes of Indians, like the Chaouenons and Loups who were settled on one of the branches of the Wabash river. Dunn, J. P. *Indiana*, (1905) Ch. II. gives an excellent summary of English plans to gain possession of the western trade.

⁴ "Tous les passages pour les Coureurs de bois se trouveront bouchés qui plus est les mariant au Mississippy l'on se dellvrera de cesgens pourveu qu'en Canada on veuille bien ne les pas souffrir d'avantage." *Ibid.*

⁵ Iberville proposed an army "assez forte pour destruire les etablissements de la Virginie, Meriland, et Pensillevania." *Ibid.* C 13; C 2; 47. An army strong enough to destroy the settlements of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

(Although this memorial is dated 1702, it speaks of the trade of Detroit, p. 47.)

garded the Wabash country as a part of Louisiana; yet Canadian merchants were already laying claim to its trade.⁶ They were vigorously supported by Frontenac who sought to secure a firm hold in the country by sending the elder Vincennes to establish a post among the Miami Indians.⁷

Iberville's urgings apparently received no consideration and nothing was done for nearly a quarter of a century. Frenchmen of Louisiana were to write memorials in regard to the coveted country while Canadians and English were fighting for its possession. Iberville had known that the country was rich in furs, and he thought that tanneries there would prove profitable. He thought also that lead mines could be worked to advantage.⁸

There are other descriptions of the country in the years following 1700 still more attractive than Iberville's. One writer added to the unlimited supply of furs and to the wealthy mines an extremely fertile soil. He described the woods as full of wild apples from which could be made excellent cider.⁹ He too feared that the English would seek to obtain the country and urged the construction of a post to bar them from descending the rivers. Yet another writer urged that a post on the "Ouabache" would be valuable for supplying the other posts of Louisiana with provisions.¹⁰ In 1708 appeared a *Memoir sur L'establissement d'une Compagnie de Commerce a la Louisiane*,¹¹ which advocated the establishment of a post there as necessary to defend the commerce of the Mississippi Valley from the advance of the

⁶ "fermiers du castor de Canadas ont demandé par leurs memoires de 1701 de rendre les limidri Canadas à Ouabache et d'y faire un etablissement pour empescher le commerce de castor par là avec les Anglois d'etablir un poste à Ouisconson sur le Misisipy." *Ibid.* 47.

⁷ Pierre Georges Roy, *Sieur de Vincennes Identified in Indiana Historical Society Publications* VII. No. 1, p. 35. This paper contains many documents regarding the efforts of the French in Canada to control the Ohio in the year 1700-1724. Transcripts of these documents are in the *Dominion Archives* at Ottawa.

⁸ *Memoires sur l'establissement de la Mobille*, 1702. *Ibid.* 51. There are frequent reports of lead mines. *Ibid.* C 13, A 6, 362 gives a glowing description.

⁹ F. Le Maire, 1718, "Tous les environs d'Ouabache sont un pais très fertile." *Ibid.* C 13, C 2; 162. All the lands along the Wabash are very fertile.

¹⁰ Du Clos speaks of two posts of great importance—Celuy d'Ouabache à cause des vivres qu'on en pouroit facilement retirer pour maintenir et conserver, the posts of St. Bernard and Illinois. *Ibid.* C 13, A 3; 545. The one on the Wabash because of the food provisions which one could easily obtain to maintain and (conserve) supply

¹¹*Ibid.* C 13, A 2; 369.

English. In 1709 Mandeville described a trip on the Wabash with the Sr. de Sucheraux who was interested in the fur trade.¹² In 1718, F. le Maire made a most urgent plea for the fortification of the Ohio in order to keep out the English and secure the trade for the French.¹³ Another memorialist declared that unless their ways were barred the English would gain control of the Ohio and all of its tributaries. They could then build a fort at its mouth and extend their influence to New Mexico. To secure this rich country the writer urged a post near the mouth of the Ohio and three missions, one of which should be at the junction of the Ohio and the Wabash.¹⁴ In 1720, the Mississippi Company advised the

¹² *Memoire sur la Louisiane pour M. de Mandeville*, 1709. Mandeville wrote regarding the Wabash, "ou j'estois avec le Sr de Sucheraux interessé pour le Commerce des Cuirs de Boeuf, vache, cerf, Biche, ours, chevreuil, Tigre, loup et autres sortes de menües pelleteries qui sont fort abondantes en ce continent." *Ibid.* C 13, A 2; 479. Where I was with Sr. de Sucheraux, interested in the commerce of the skins of the ox, cow, deer, hind, bears, horse, tiger, wolf, and other kinds of small fur which are very abundant in this continent.

¹³ Le Maire wrote, "Ouabache est la 2e clef de la Louisiane" [The Mississippi is the first] "et il est de la dernière conséquence à la France de s'en assurer la possession par un bon fort, et un Etablissement considérable dans quelqu'une de ses fourches. Celle que forme la Rivière des Casquinambeaux me paroîtroit la plus de conséquence à fortifier parceque de cet endroit on peut barrer le chemin aux Anglois - - - Au reste outre qu'en fortifiant un bon poste sur cette Rivière on se mettoit à couvert de toutes les Entreprises que pourroient faire les Anglois sur le Miciscipi, on s'attireroit encore parce moyen, le commerce de toutes les Nations de l'Est lequel est de très grande conséquence, et pour le profit qu'en tireroient les françois, et pour le dommage que Souffriroient les Anglois, si on leur enlevoit ce trafic qui seul leur vaut plus que tous les autres." *Ibid.* C 13 C 2; 162. The Wabash is the second work of the Louisiana and the last resort of the French of assuring it for themselves by a strong fort, and a considerable establishment in some one of its forks. That one, which forms the river Casquinambeaux seems to me the best to fortify because from this place we can block the road to the English. Moreover, other than fortifying a good post on this river, we can place a protection against all the enterprises which the English can carry on (or make) on the Mississippi,—or again by protecting ourselves by this means, the commerce of all the nations of the east, which is of very great importance, and by the profit which the French are drawing from it, and by the harm (or loss) which the English are suffering, if we can take away from them this traffic which alone they wish more than all the others.

¹⁴ This *Memoire, Sur La Louisiane*, unsigned, probably written in 1716, declares that to keep out the English "il faut établir des postes avancez dans tous Les endroits par Lesquels ils pourroient pénétrer dans la Louisiane c'est à dire sur toutes Les rivières qui ont Leurs sources a l'Est - - - Mais L'endroit par Lequel Les Anglois peuvent plus aisément venir dans Le Miciscipi et même dans Le Missouri, C'est la Rivière Ouabache La quelle ayant reçu les rivières des Kaskinampaux et celles des Chaouanons qui ont Leurs sources tout proche de La Virginie, et la Rivière Ohio qui a sa source dans Le pays des Iroquois, se rend enfin dans Le Miciscipi." The writer believes that unless this is done the English will build a fort "à L'embouchure d'Ouabache, dont il sera im-

erection of a post on the Wabash. Charlevoix also considered the Wabash country of great importance.¹⁵

In spite of all these urgings, there was not enough force in the various governments of Louisiana to take advantage of the opportunities before them. Traders from Canada were, however, early in the field with only the competition of the English to threaten them.

In 1712 the French of Canada defeated the Foxes at Detroit and soon after Governor Vaudreuil sent the elder Vincennes to live among the Miamis in the Wabash country. In 1715 this adventurer was in the neighborhood of the modern Fort Wayne and making every effort to stop the trade of the Indians with the English.¹⁶ He apparently had some success and undoubtedly secured great influence among the Miamis.¹⁷ About 1718, his son, a boy of eighteen years, joined him.¹⁸ This boy was to spend the remainder of his life in the Wabash country and to found the post which the French of Louisiana had been urging for years.

possible de Les Chaser, et par Le moyen duquel fort ils se rendront maitres du Miciscipi, et des payis qui sont a son Ouest jusqu'au Nouveau Mexique. 1e..... il faut incessamment faire construire un fort à L'embouchure d'Ouabache..... 2e.... Il faut obliger Les Jesuites d'établir une Mission dans L'endroit ou La rivière des Kaskinampaux entre dans Ouabache, Une autre Mission a L'endroit ou Ouabache reçoit La rivière des Chaouanons. Enfi une troisième Mission au confluent de La rivière Ohio dans celle d'Ouabache. . . . Il est à propos d'avoir a chacune de ces Missions dix soldats detachez de la Compagnie d'Ouabache.' *Ibid.* C 13 A 43; 188. It is necessary to establish posts advancing in all the places through which they can go into Louisiana, that is on all the rivers which have their sources in the east. But the place through which the English can most easily come into the Mississippi and even in the Missouri, is the Wabash river having received the rivers of Kaskinampaux and Chaouanous which have their sources quite near Virginia and the Ohio river which has its source in the country of the Iroquois, and finally emptying into the Mississippi. . . . at the mouth of the Wabash and from which it will be impossible to chase them and by means of this fort they will make themselves mistress of the Mississippi, and of the country on the west to New Mexico. . . . (1) it is very urgent to build a fort at the mouth of the Wabash. . . . (2) it is necessary to oblige the Jesuits to establish a mission at the place where the Kaskinampaux river empties into the Wabash, another where the Wabash receives the river Chaouanous. Finally, a third mission where the Ohio and Wabash flow together. It is (advisable) timely to have at each of these missions ten soldiers detached from the country of the Wabash.

¹⁵ Winsor, *The Mississippi Basin*, 149.

¹⁶ Roy, *Vincennes Identified* 71. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, IX 931.

¹⁷ Roy, *Vincennes Identified*, 72.

¹⁸ It is improbable that any copies of this correspondence were sent to the French Colonial office and there can hardly be any other way of preserving it.

In 1719 the father died and his influence with the Miamis descended in large measure to the son. The young man rose in reputation, and some time after 1720 Boisbrilliant, the commander at the Illinois, apparently sought his services for Louisiana. The correspondence between them has probably been lost,¹⁹ but it is likely that the energetic commander of Fort de Chartres was planning to carry through the construction of the long-contemplated Wabash post, and desired the help of Vincennes in this undertaking. In 1724 Vaudreuil, the governor of Canada, knew of Boisbrilliant's schemes and wrote him a letter of protest. He declared that the Wabash country in no way belonged to Louisiana and objected to Boisbrilliant's efforts to draw Vincennes away from the service of Canada. He declared that if the efforts were continued he would appeal to the king.¹⁹

This correspondence probably brought to a head the dispute over the Wabash country which had been dragging along for a quarter of a century and had become acute after the annexation of the Illinois to Louisiana in 1717.²⁰ Vaudreuil claimed the Wabash as a part of Canada and its trade had hitherto gone by the Maumee to the St. Lawrence. The Wabash, however, was naturally an outpost of the Illinois country and was on the route by which the English were marching towards the Mississippi.

The Company of the Indies which had succeeded the Mississippi Company in control of Louisiana, hesitated to begin the fight for the territory in question. It was handicapped, moreover, by lack of funds and in 1724 decided to reduce the post of Illinois to eight men and to form no new posts.²¹ Boisbrilliant saw the danger and informed the officials of the company that the English would win over the Indians unless the French were quick to supply their needs.²² Boisbrilliant was probably acting under instructions from his cousin, Bien-

¹⁹ Roy, *Vincennes Identified*, 84, quotes Vaudreuil's letter to Boisbrilliant. Original is in *Archives du Canada* F. 56, p. 147. Transcript in *Dominion Archives*.

²⁰ Winsor, *The Mississippi Basin*, 148-9, briefly describes this dispute. *Délibérations du Conseil Supérieur de la Louisiane*, 6 Mars 1725. *Arc. Nat. Col. C* 13 A 9: 49.

²¹ Boisbrilliant *à la Cie Des Indes*. Feb. 9, 1725. Letter quoted by Roy, *Vincennes Identified*, 85, from Margry, *Mémoires et Documents pour Servir à L'Histoire des Origines Françaises des Pays d'Outre-Mer*. XVI. 657.

²²*Ibid.*

ville, governor of Louisiana. Bienville had doubtless been carrying on a correspondence with the Company of the Indies regarding the Wabash post and apparently his recommendations were looked upon with favor. It appears that he had already obtained sanction to start a post in this region, for in 1725 he wrote that he had delayed its construction for fear of not having enough merchandise to carry on a trade with the Indians. He declared at the same time that the small garrison maintained by Vaudreuil on the upper Wabash (near Ft. Wayne) could not keep out the English who had free access to the Mississippi by way of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee rivers. He urged as a further reason for assistance in building this post that there were a number of French families already settled on the Wabash who needed protection.²³ These settlers traded directly with the natives while the English still had to carry on their commerce through the Iroquois tribes that wintered on the upper Ohio.²⁴

The urgings of Bienville and Boisbrilliant apparently brought the Company of the Indies to the point of making a decision. In May, 1725, it asked the governor of New France to take measures to keep foreign traders out of the Wabash country. It suggested the construction of new posts to preserve communication between Canada and Louisiana and one of these posts was to be placed on the Wabash.²⁵ Later in the same year it wrote to Boisbrilliant asking him

²³*Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 C1; 398. Bienville *Mémoire* 1725; "Nous n'avons point de fort sur Ouabache une des plus considérables Rivières de ce Continent, on a toujours eu en vue d'y faire construire un. J'en avois moy-meme envoyé un projet à la Compagnie, la disette dans la quelle Je me suis trouvé m'a empesché de l'exécuter aussy bien que la crainte de ne pouvoir soutenir mon entreprise faute marchandises nécessaires . . . un grand nombre de familles de Canada y Seroient desja établys . . . il est vray que M. de Vaudreuil gouverneur général du Canada tient une petit garnison Sur le haut de cette Rivière . . . il y faudroit une compagnie complete qui arresteroit les partis des Sauvages du Canada et mettroit les Voyageurs en état de faire leur chasse avec plus de securité . . ." We have no fort on the Wabash, one of the most important rivers on this continent. We have always thought of constructing one there. I have myself sent a plan to the company saying in it that I am very anxious to build it because of the fear of not being able to carry on my enterprise for lack of (?) necessary merchandise . . . a great number of Canadian families have already settled there . . . it is true that Mr. Vaudreuil, governor general of Canada, keeps a small garrison at the source of this river . . . a complete company will be necessary which can halt the savage parties from Canada and enable the travelers to make their journey with more security.

²⁴*Ibid.* 368. Bienville, vers. 1725.

to co-operate with Vincennes, who was still in command among the Miamis, in an effort to exclude the English.²⁶ It was probably due to the promptings of company officials that the king shortly after this instructed the governor general of Canada to order Vincennes to act with Boisbrilliant for the same purpose.²⁷

Boisbrilliant apparently opened negotiations with Vincennes at once. His efforts were hastened by the information that the Dutch from Albany had established posts on the upper Ohio, where they had built two mills "de Bates", a fort, and several store houses, abundantly supplied with goods. Since the French were short of merchandise and what they had was not of a kind to attract the Indians, Boisbrilliant feared that the newcomers would get most of the trade.²⁸ Bienville, however, urged that the fort be built, and recommended that Vincennes should command it.²⁹

Boisbrilliant's report regarding English activities probably stirred the Company of the Indies to action. In September, 1726, a letter was sent by the company to Perier, who had succeeded Bienville as governor of Louisiana, stating that the Wabash country was not yet occupied by any nation of Europe; but that if the English should establish themselves on any of the great rivers of this country, they could not only threaten the Illinois but could break communications between Louisiana and Canada. The company also gave orders to Perier to establish a post on the Wabash, if this danger was still threatening; and asked the governor of Canada to direct Vincennes, who was still among the Miamis, to co-operate with the commander of the new post.³⁰

²⁶ *Rapport Sur les Archives Canadiennes* 1904; p. 16.

²⁷ Margry, *Memoires et Documents*, VI. 657, quoted by Roy, 86.

²⁸ *Archives du Canada*. B. XLII. See also Roy, 87.

²⁹ Boisbrilliant au Ministre de la Marine, Nouvelle Orléans, 13 Mars. 1726. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A9; 347. Bienville at this time was in France defending his administration and Boisbrilliant was acting as governor of Louisiana.

³⁰ *Mémoire de la Comp. des Indes servant d'Instruction pour M. Perier nouvellement pourvu du Commandement général de la Louisiane* 30 7 bre 1716. *Ibid.* C13 B, I. This gives the substance of Boisbrilliant's report.

³¹ "La Compagnie a ordonné l'Establissement d'n poste sur la Rivière de Ouabache, et a prié M. Le Gouverneur de Canada de donner ordre de son costé au Sr. de Vincennes qui commande chez Les Oulatanons Miamis Etablis vers le haut de Ouabache de S'entendre avec le Commandant du nouveau Poste." *Ibid.* The company has ordered the establishment of a post on the Wabash River and has asked the Governor of Canada to give the command of his poste to Mr.

The company even expressed its willingness, if the English were becoming too formidable, to build two posts; one on the Wabash and one on the Ohio. The instructions to Perier, however, suggested that Vincennes might be induced to enter their service for a gratuity of three hundred livres in addition to his pay. The company ended the letter by expressing the hope that if the English did not appear too dangerous and Vincennes could be bought over, it might be spared the expense of building even one post. It asked Perier to decide whether Vincennes and his Miamis with the assistance of eight or ten soldiers, might not be counted upon to hold the country.³¹

Perier apparently acted quickly in seeking an understanding by which Vincennes was to enter the service of Louisiana. In October, 1727, the company approved an arrangement by which he was to receive three hundred livres in addition to his salary.³² Vincennes, however, did not resign his Canadian commission immediately, for as late as October 15, 1729, he was still listed as an officer of New France.³³ The next year, however, the governor and intendant of Canada wrote: "The Ouyatonons have been led into the government of Louisiana by Sr. de Vincennes, who is entirely separated from this government."³⁴

The long delay before the new arrangement was fully understood may be explained by the slowness of communication. The news that the company approved his salary could

Vincennes who commands the Ouyatonons Miamis established near the source of the Wabash, to extend it with the commandant of the new post.

³¹ M. Perier Se consultera bien sur cette affaire et Examinera Si en donnant huit ou dix Soldats au Sr. de Vincennes avec le Missionnaire destiné pour Ouabache, il ne se trouveroit pas en Etat d'assurer par Ses Sauvages la communication de la Louisianne avec le Canada et d'Empescher les Anglois de pénétrer dans notre Colonie sans obliger la Compagnie de construire au bas de la Rivière de Ouabache un fort dont la dépense de l'Etablissement et l'Entretien de la garnison font un objet de Conséquence." *Ibid.* M. Perier will think over this affair carefully and see if on giving eight or ten soldiers to Vincennes with the Missionnaire destined for the Wabash, he will not find himself in the state of assuring peace. His savages the communication from Louisiana with Canada and prevent the English from going into our colony without necessitating the company to build at the mouth (or lower part) of the Wabash a fort of which the expense of building and keeping in repair the garrison is an object of consideration.

³² Compagnie de Indes à Perier et de la Chaise, Paris 27 Oct., 1727. *Ibid.* C13 A1; 93.

³³ *Archives du Canada.* F51, from Roy. *Opus Cita.* 89.

³⁴ *Archives du Canada.* *Correspondence générale.* F52, from Roy, 90.

not reach Vincennes before some time in the spring of 1728. In the fall of 1727 Perier, in accordance with the company's suggestion, had sent goods to supply a post on the Wabash and another on the Ohio,³⁵ but the boat in which they were shipped was stopped by the ice before it reached its destination and was compelled to return.³⁶ Furthermore, in the spring of 1728 Vincennes was taken seriously ill³⁷ and was unable to undertake any work until well into the summer.³⁸

On account of these delays the fort could not be started before the company had had time to lay down full instructions. In October, 1727, the company complained to Perier and to de la Chaise, the intendant of Louisiana, that it had received no recommendations regarding the site of the proposed post. The communication then proceeded to discuss in detail the available locations, pointing out that the purpose was to keep the English out of the Wabash country and to keep open communication between Louisiana and Canada. In view of these purposes the writer declared that the post must not be located at the junction of the "Ouabache" with the Mississippi, nor at the mouth of the Casquinaubous (Cumberland). Either of these locations would be too far down the river to attract the Miamis or receive their support. If the Miamis could be persuaded to move from their homes to

³⁵ Perier à Maurepas 15 Nov., 1727. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A10; 234 . . . "notre unique attention doit estre d'Empescher les Anglois de S'approcher de cette colonie . . . C'est pourquoy J'ay Envoyé des marchandises pour Etablir le Poste de Ouabache et même en faire un Sur la rivière Ohio . . ." Our one attention should be to prevent the English from approaching this colony. That is why I have sent provisions to establish a post on the Wabash and even to build one on the Ohio.

³⁶ Perier et de la Chaise à la Compagnie des Indes 30 mars 1728. *Ibid.* C13 A11, 106. Celui qui a été destiné pour ouabache a este retenu par les glaces audessus des Arkansas. The one which was sent for the Wabash has been withheld by ice above the Arkansas.

³⁷ Perier et de la Chaise à la Cie des Indes. N. O. 9 avril, 1728. *Ibid.* C13 A11, 32. Le Sr. de Vincennes qui devoit Etablir le poste sur ouabache est descendu pour se faire guérir d'une maladie qu'il a, il est resté à l'habitation du Sr. Petit de Levilliers et N'a pu encore venir jusqu'icy, quand il y sera nous prendrons des mesures juste pr. cet Etablissement." Mr. Vincennes who is to establish the post on the Wabash has taken ill. He is at the home of Sr. Petit de Levilliers and has not yet been able to come here. When he comes we shall take just measures for this establishment.

³⁸ Same to same. N. O. 31 juillet, 1728. *Ibid.* 58. Le Sieur DeVincennes qui étoit resté malade à l'habitation du sieur Petit de Levilliers est descendu après sa guérison . . . Mr. Vincennes who was sick at the home of Sieur Petit de Levilliers has come down to his garrison.

the new post, continued the writer, the English would have no one to oppose them on the upper Ohio and Wabash and could easily get possession of the country and its trade. Owing to these considerations the company urged that the post should be established in the country of the Miamis. It suggested further that Vincennes should be under the direction of Desliettes who was then commander of the Illinois.³⁹

The new post was to be manned by ten soldiers and two officers. The company allowed 300 livres for construction of the fort and 1,170 livres for the subsistence of the men during the first year. It also allowed 800 livres for presents to the Indians. The pay of the soldiers and other expenses brought the total allowance for the year up to 3,230 livres.

Perier objected to the smallness of the company's allowance. He wrote that labor was high and that it would cost 600 instead of 300 livres to build a suitable fort. He declared also that for presents to the Indians not less than 3,000 livres should be set aside. He promised to go ahead with the project, however, and informed the company that he would leave the selection of a site for the post to Vincennes.⁴⁰

Vincennes was still too sick to undertake the expedition and it was four months after Perier promised to follow the company's instructions before he was able to set out.⁴¹ Vincennes apparently thought it best not to build a fort at once

³⁹ Cie des Indes à Perier et de la Chaise Paris 27 Oct., 1727. *Ibid.* 93. Reasons why the post should not be on the lower Wabash. "La première, que ce fort ne peut se soutenir que par le secours des sauvages Miamis, et qu'il n'y a pas d'apparence qu'on puisse les déterminer à venir se placer dans un lieu si éloigné du pays qu'ils occupent. La seconde, que quand ce fort seroit bien solide et appuyé par les Miamis au bord de la Rivière de Ouabache, non seulement cette disposition n'empêcheroit pas les Anglois de s'Etablir sur celle des trois Rivières en question qu'ils jugeroient à propos, mais encore Elle leur en procureroit les moyens, parce que n'y aiant plus de sauvages dans le haut des Rivières qui pussent s'opposer à leurs desseins ils pourroient si fortifier, s'étendre, et se mettre en Etat de tomber tout d'un coup sur l'Etablissement de Ouabache . . ." First, this fort cannot sustain itself except by the aid of the savage Miamis, and it is not likely that we can persuade them to come, settle in a place so far from the country which they occupy. Second, when this fort will be very solid and supported by the Miamis on the banks of the Wabash, not only this disposition will not prevent the English from establishing on these three rivers in question which they will justly judge, but still it will procure for them the means, because no longer having the savages at the source of the rivers which opposes their plans, they can fortify, extend, and place themselves in a position to suddenly fall on the Wabash establishment.

⁴⁰ Perier et de la Chaise à la Cie des Indes. N. O. 30 Mars., 1728. *Ibid.* 109.

⁴¹ Perier et de la Chaise à la Cie des Indes. 31 Juillet., 1728. *Ibid.* 58.

but to resume his residence among the Miamis.⁴² He gave as his reason that it would avoid a useless expense because the Indians would not move down to the place where he wished to locate the post. It is probable, too, that he did not feel that he had enough money to undertake the building of a fort, for the next spring Perier was still declaring that the project could not be carried through with the allowance the company had made.⁴³

Vincennes apparently did not keep in touch with the governor and intendant at New Orleans. There is occasional mention of the Wabash post during the next three or four years,⁴⁴ but in 1733 Salmon wrote that he did not know whether or not Vincennes had yet built his fort.⁴⁵ Vincennes, however, received his pay regularly and allowances for expenses⁴⁶ and in 1730 was described as "useful to the colony".⁴⁷

About March, 1733, Vincennes wrote a letter describing the location of his fort as eighty leagues above the junction of the Wabash and Ohio. He stated that the place was suitable for a big establishment and he would have made one there if he had had the force. He complained that he had no

⁴² Perier et de la Chaise à la Cie des Indes. 31 Juillet., 1728. Ibid. 58 Et il [Vincennes] a résolu qu'il resteroit parmy les Miamis ou ils auront son fort embulant affin d'Eviter une dépense qui deviendrait inutile parce que effectivement outre que Miamis ne viendroient pas tous S'établir sur les trois Rivières ce qui en resteroit Seroit capable de prêter la main à l'Anglois au lieu qu'en restant parmy Eux comme il est aimé et Estimé de cette Nation. . . ." An he resolved to remain among the Miamis where they would have his fort *embulant* (?) in order to avoid an expense which would become useless because, surely, other, than the Miamis would not all settle on the three rivers, those who while remaining would be able to press the hand of the English in place of remaining among them as is loved and esteemed by that nation.

⁴³ 25 Mars., 1729. Ibid. 330.

⁴⁴ Denis, Commandant at Natchitoches, wrote 30 November, 1731. "A Ouabache qui a toujours esté negligé." Ibid. C13 A13 170. Perier wrote "apres 1731." "La distance est grande et nous n'avons aucuns postes que Ouabache qui est dans L'intérieur. Ibid. 238. To the Wabash which has always been neglected. The distance is great and we have no other posts except the Wabash which is in the interior.

⁴⁵ Salmon, Nouvelle Orléans, ler'fevrier, 1733. "A L'égard de celui d'Ouabache C'est le Sr. de Vincennes qui y commande. Je N'ay pu encore Scavoir de Ses Nouvelles. Je ne Scais point s'il y a un fort n'y en quel Etat il peut estre." Ibid. C13 A17, 28. To the watch of the Wabash. Mr. Vincennes commands it. I have not yet been able to learn of his news. I do not know whether he has a fort nor in what condition it is. Salmon had been in Louisiana only a short time.

⁴⁶ Liste des officiers et Commandants des postes de la Louisiane 19 Aout, 1732. Ibid. D2 C50, 31. Also Ibid. D2 D, 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid. D2 C31, 89.

goods to trade and the English were carrying away all the furs. He believed that every year furs to the value of 30,000 livres could be obtained at this post.⁴⁸ About the same time, Vincennes wrote another letter "Du fort de Ouabache ce 21e mars 1733."⁴⁹

It appears evident that Vincennes lived among the Miamis for at least four years before building his post. It could not have been before late in 1732 or early in 1733 that the foundations for the new establishment were laid.⁵⁰

Every French post was supposed to be a mission, but there were many difficulties and delays before there was a mission on the Wabash. Every plan, however, for establishment of the post included provision for a missionary. In 1716 Crozat, who then held a patent for Louisiana, suggested that since the Jesuits were already in the Illinois country, they should furnish a priest for the Wabash.⁵¹ In 1724, provision was made for a mission as soon as the post should be established.⁵² The next year the Jesuit order in Louisiana

⁴⁸ Vers Mars., 1733. Du fort de Ouabache La proximité d e l'Anglais Ille ma este impossible De faire rassembler toute des nations [of the Wabash] par ce quil a tout jours manqué De marchandise. Dans cettres androy le fort que jay fait faire est a quastre Ving lieux dans Le Uabache au Desus Ses Rivière par ou Les Anglois auroit peu D esendre et avoir commerce avec ces nations. Landroit est fort propre pour y faire Un gros Etablissement, ce que j aurois fait si j'avois eut D es force. A Lesgard D u Commerce que Lonny peu faire, cest La pelleterie. Ille peut sorfir toute Les année D e ce postre pour trante millivre De pelleterie." [Signed] "Vinsenne." Toward March, 1733. From the Wabash fort. The nearness of the English has made it impossible for me to gather together all the tribes of the Wabash because there is always a lack of merchandise. In this place the fort which I have built is 80 leagues up the Wabash above the river where the English could have gone down and traded with the tribes. The place is very suitable to build a large establishment, which I would have done if I had had the means. In regard to the commerce which one can carry on, it is the fur trade. One can go out all year from this post to trade pounds of furs.

⁴⁹ Vinsennes Du fort de Ouabache. *Ibid.* 262.

⁵⁰ In 1772 the "habitants" of Vincennes in a memorial to General Gage stated "Notre Etablissement est de soixante et dix années." C. O. 5, 90. 265. Our establishment is seventy years old. If they were honest in their statement their traditions after forty years were entirely unreliable.

⁵¹ 23 juin., 1716. "Que par raport aux deux postes qui Seront sur la Rivière Ouabache qui Sont fort près des Illinois on pourroit convenir avec les Jésuites quiy Sont déjà. (Recommendation. Approved by the "Conseil.") *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A4, 119. By the report of the two posts on the Wabash river which are very near the Illinois, we can please (or join with?) the Jesuits who are already * * *.

⁵² Etat des missionnaires des différents postes 20 dec., 1724. "Postes qui sont à Remplir: A Ouabache lors qu'il Sera Etably. Un Preste 600 lbs. Pour vin, farine, Cierges 195 lbs, Pour un Domestique 185.8. Total 980.8. *Ibid.* D2 D, 10.

definitely asked the Company of the Indies, which had succeeded to the control of the province, for the establishment of a number of missions, one of which should be on the Wabash.⁵³ The company agreed to build churches at a number of places and to maintain ten priests in the province. One of the missions was to be placed "at the fort which will be established on the Wabash."⁵⁴

Father Doutreleau⁵⁵ was appointed as the first priest of the Wabash mission apparently in the fall or winter of 1727. He embarked for his post with a "chapel" and materials for building a house and church. The boat in which he was traveling ran into ice above the mouth of the Arkansas and the missionary lost everything except his own life. Father Beaubois, superior of the Jesuits in Louisiana, estimated the losses at six thousand livres and asked the company for reimbursement. Perier and de la Chaise suggested that the company replace the lost chapel and credit the order to the sum of two thousand five hundred livres. The governor and intendant also relieved Beaubois from the necessity of sending a missionary to the Wabash, until such time as compensation could be given.⁵⁶

Posts which are to be supplied: Wabash when it will be established. A priest 600 lbs., wine, flour, candles, 195 lbs., a servant 185.8. Total 980.8.

⁵³ "Demandes des R. P. Jésuites. Il sera Etably des Missionnaires Jésuites Scavoir. Réponses de la Cie:

Aux Illinois -----	3	2 Suffiront.
A Ouabache -----	1	1 bon."

Ibid. C13 A10, 101. Demands from the R. P. Jesuits. There shall be sent some missionaries Jesuits:

To Illinois -----	3	2 will suffice.
To Wabash -----	1	1 good.

⁵⁴ 20 fevrier, 1726. *Ibid.* A22, 155-163.

⁵⁵ See *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 67, p. 342, for brief sketch of Father D'Outreleau. The note implies that in 1728 he was at the fort on the Wabash. As will be seen from the account of Father Beaubois this is not correct. Note 56. Dunn, Mission to the Ouabache in *Indiana Historical Society Publications* III, 278 gives a brief account of Father D'Outreleau.

⁵⁶ Beaubois, 10 avril, 1728. After describing Doutreleau's losses Beaubois declares that until they are reimbursed, "on n'Exige point de moy d'Envoyer à Ouabache aucun Missionaire veu l'Impossibilité ou je suis de former cet Etablissement sans chapelle et sans avoir les fonds nécessaires pour bastir. *Ibid.* C13 A11, 189. They will not exact me to send to the Wabash any missionary in face of (?) the impossibility that I have of forming this establishment without a chapel and without the necessary funds to run it. Perier et de la Chaise à la Cie. des Indes, 9 avril, 1728, also explains the situation. (*Ibid.* 33) and on March 30 they write of the shipwreck. *Ibid.* 106.

Winsor writes that "Vincennes had been founded on the Wabash by Father Mermet." *The Mississippi Basin*, 84.

While waiting for a settlement of the Wabash losses, Father Doutreleau was sent to the Chickasaw post⁵⁷ but in 1729 he was still listed as attached to the Wabash. This project for a mission apparently was allowed to drop for nothing more is said of it. An official list of missionaries in Louisiana drawn up in 1731 made no mention of the Wabash.⁵⁸

In 1734 the governor and intendent of Louisiana wrote that a father de Guienne was at the Wabash on business for the Jesuits. A missionary there was badly needed and they requested Father de Beaubois to keep de Guienne there until they could hear from the company.⁵⁹ After this no mention of a missionary at the Wabash appears in the reports of the post until after the death of Vincennes.

In 1732 Bienville returned as governor of Louisiana and he at once renewed his plans for destroying the power of the Chickasaw and other Indian tribes friendly to the English. He ordered St. Ange, who was still in command at Fort de Chartres, to organize the Indians of the north to help in the proposed attack.⁶⁰ St. Ange reported, however, that the Indians of his territory were in bad humor and Vincennes declared that the tribes around his post were no less dissatisfied. The Wabash tribes were complaining because the French failed to supply them with the goods they wanted and were trading actively with the English.⁶¹ Vincennes complained

⁵⁷Perier et Chaise à la Cie des Indes, 25 mars., 1729. *Ibid.* C13 A11, 324.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* C13 A13, 273.

⁵⁹Bienville et Salmon, 15 avril, 1733. "Le P de Guienne est maintenant a Quabache, on il est allé attendre les ordres de ses supérieurs. Il conviendrait qu'il y eut un missionnaire dans ce poste et nous avons prié le Père de Beaubois de l'engager a y rester, jusqu'à ce que nous ayons reçu réponse de Votre Grandeur" *Ibid.* C13 A18, 103. Father de Guienne is now at the Wabash, where he went to await the orders of his superiors. It would be convenient for there to be a missionary at this post and we have begged Father Beaubois to engage him to remain here until we receive a reply from 'your Highness.' "

⁶⁰St. Ange à de Bienville. Fort de Chartres, 30 avril, 1733, describes correspondence with Vincennes regarding a league of Indians. *Ibid.* C13 A17, 247.

⁶¹Bienville et Salmon, 20 mai, 1733. Situation among the Illinois Indians reported alarming. "D'un autre Costé le Sr. de Vincennes qui commande aux miamis, marque que les sauvages établis sur Ouabache, ne sont pas plus Tranquilles que les Illinois, qu'il n'est point en Etat de les Empêcher d'avoir Commerce avec les Anglois, parce qu'il faudroit tous les faire revenir et qu'il n'a point de Marchandises pour les y Engager, que sa garnison d'ailleurs est trop faible pour Contenir ces nations." *Ibid.* C13 A16, 110. From another poste (?) Vincennes who commands the Miamis notices that the tribes on the Wabash are no more peaceful than the Illinois, that he is not in a position to keep them

that his garrison was too small to control the Indians. He asked for a force of thirty men and an officer.⁶² Although the fort at this time was in good condition it needed a veneer of stone to make it strong enough to withstand any attack and it would have to be made larger to accommodate any reinforcements. It contained barracks for the small force detached there and a house which Vincennes had built at his own expense.⁶³

Bienville decided to strengthen the position of Vincennes at once. He planned, furthermore, to use every effort to restore French authority on the Ohio and upper Mississippi. St. Ange, who was quite old, was relieved of the command of Fort de Chartres to make way for Captain D'artaguiette, a young and active officer.⁶⁴ Vincennes himself stood high in the confidence of Bienville who frequently praised him for his energy, wisdom, and general usefulness.⁶⁵ His great influence among the Miamis also told heavily in his favor.⁶⁶

from trading with the English, because it would be necessary to have them all return and he has no merchandise to trade them, his garrison, moreover, is too weak to control these tribes.

⁶² "Vinsenne", mars., 1733. "ille nest pas possible De rester Dans cette amdroyt avec su peut De troupe; ille faudroyt trante hommes avec une officer." *Ibid.* C13 A17, 260. It is not possible to remain in this place with so few troops. Thirty men and an officer are needed.

⁶³ Bienville et Salmon. Nouvelle Orléans, 8 avril, 1734. This gives substance of Vincennes' report. *Ibid.* C13 A18, 84.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* See "Etat des officiers entretenui à la Louisiane, 1733. St. Ange Pere Lieutt Reffe Commandt aux Illinois. Bon officier mais très vieur il s'est distingué à défaite des Renards." *Ibid.* D2 C50, 35. In Liste Apostille des officiers—à la Louisiana, 25 avril, 1734. D'artaguiette was described as "Sert depuis, 1717 qu'il fut fait Enseigne et Capitaine en 1719, d'une conduite irréprochable, Judicieux, sage, désintéresse, Brave, et jaloux de son devoirs—I eet agé de 33 ans." *Ibid.* D2 C51, 89. Good officer but very old, he distinguished himself at the defeat of Fox Indians. In the list of officers (?) at Louisiana, April 25, 1734. D'artaguiette served since 1717, he was made officer (enseigne) and Captain in 1719, of an irreproachable conduct, judicious, wise, interested, brave and jealous of his duty. He is 33 years old.

⁶⁵ In "Etat des officiers—à la Louisiane Paris, 6 mars., 1730." Vincennes was spoken of as "Bon, utile à la Colonie. *Ibid.* In "Liste apostille des officiers" 1734. Vincennes was described as "Il est Canadien, fils d'un enseigne d'infanterie en Canada, est vigoureux, actif, intelligent pour le gouvernement des sauvages Miamis par qui il a été adopté depuis quinze ans. Il est—agé de 30 ans." *Ibid.* 89. He is a Canadian, son of an officer of the infantry in Canada, is brave, active, knows the government of the Miamis among whom he has been for 15 years. He is 30 years old.

⁶⁶ 1733 "De Vincennes Lieutt Reffe Commandant Aoubache. Bon officier qui sert bien, qui est en grande considération chez les Miamis." *Ibid.* 248. Good officer who serves well, who is in good favor with the Miamis.

In the spring of 1733 war broke out between the French and the Chickasaws. These Indians had long been friends of the English and they were the most dangerous obstacle to Bienville's plans. They expressed a desire, however, to remain at peace with Vincennes and his Miamis, and sent a Frenchman whom they had captured, to Vincennes with direct proposals for peace.⁶⁷

Vincennes was in difficult straits. He was without Indian trading goods and the English were getting all the Indian furs. The Miamis were becoming insolent and Vincennes reported that he feared some evil among them. The Chickasaws soon renewed their hostility and were even threatening his post.⁶⁸

Beauharnois, the governor of Canada, was urging the northern Indians to begin war upon the Chickasaws. He sent a pipe and belt to the Illinois Indians to urge them to join in the attack. In the spring of 1733 many Indians were journeying south for the great attack.⁶⁹ The expedition, however, came to nothing. Bienville opposed the plans of Beauharnois to begin active fighting in the spring. The autumn, he argued, would be a more suitable time for the attack, for then the invading armies could live upon the provisions the Chickasaws had stored for the winter.⁷⁰

In spite of the threat of a general Indian war which would make the exposed Wabash post one of the most probable points of Indian attack, Vincennes decided, in the spring of 1733 to go to Canada. He had permission to make the trip from the governor of Canada, but apparently did not even take the trouble to ask for leave from his superiors in Louisiana. He informed Bienville that he was going to look after

⁶⁷ Louboey, 8 may, 1733. *Ibid.* C13 A17, 229. St. Ange to Bienville. *Ibid.* 248.

⁶⁸ Vincennes "vers Mars, 1733." *Ibid.* C13 A17, 259. Translation of this letter in Roy, *Opus Citra*. 92. Bienville and Salmon summarize the reports in their letter of May 20, 1733. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A16, 110.

⁶⁹ Vincennes, 21 Mars, 1733. *Ibid.* 261. A translation of Vincennes' letter is given in Roy, *Opus Citra*. 93. St. Ange wrote of this Indian movement to Bienville April 30, 1733. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A17, 247.

⁷⁰ Bienville et Salmon, 20 may, 1733. "L'automne est la seule qui convient parce que alors en vivant au dépens de l'ennemy on peut tenir longtems la campagne. *Ibid.* C13 A16, 112. Autumn is the only time convenient because then, while living at the expense of the enemy, we can hold the country a long time.

some family affairs, but promised not to start unless everything looked peaceful among his Indians.

Vincennes began his journey in the spring of 1733 and did not return until the following winter. He came back with a complaint that Beauharnois required "habitants" of Illinois to buy a *congé* before he would allow them to return to their homes.⁷¹ He also reported to D'artaguiette that more than a hundred Canadian families were ready to migrate to the Wabash and Illinois countries but were detained by the governor.⁷²

The spring of 1734 brought renewed activity in affairs of the Wabash. Bienville promised to furnish the thirty men that Vincennes had requested a year before, and ordered D'artaguiette to supply them from his troops. He wrote that he regarded the Wabash post as one of the most important in the colony and that it must by all means be maintained.⁷³ Vincennes also had in mind to strengthen his position by bringing other Indians to reinforce those already at the post. There was a village of Piankishaws on the Wabash some sixty leagues above the post and these had been trading with the English. If Vincennes could bring them down to his post he would thus not only make his position more secure

⁷¹ Vincennes, 21 Mars, 1733. "Je vais partir dans quelques jours pour aller au grand village et si je voy tout tranquille je pouré desendre au Canada. Monsieur Le marquis De Beauharnois me marque qu'il me permet d'aller faire un tour pour vacquer aux affaires de ma famille, je ne ceré au plus que cinq mois. Dans ce voyage j'escrit a mr De st. ange quil anvoy M son fis a mon apsance." *Ibid.* C13 A17, 261. There seems to have been some misunderstanding about the command of the post in Vincennes' absence for on April 30, 1733, St. Ange wrote to Bienville concerning Vincennes "je luy ay demandé S il ne falloit pas mettre un officier à S a place et il me dit alors qu'un sergent Suffisoit." *Ibid.* 250. I am going to leave in a few days to go to the great village and if everything is peaceful I shall go down to Canada. Marquis Beauharnois permits me to go to tend to some family affairs. I shall not remain longer than five months. In this voyage I wrote to mr. de st ange that he send his son to my aid. I reminded him that it was not necessary to place an officer in his place and he told me then that a sergeant would suffice.

⁷² Bienville, 22 avril, 1734. "Sr de Vincennes qui est arrivé cet hyver du Canada a rapporté a M. D'Artaguiette que plus de Cent familles seroient venus avec luy pour S'Etablir aux Illinois et a Ouabache si ils en avoient pu avoir la permission." *Ibid.* C13 A18, 142. Vincennes, who arrived this winter from Canada, reported to D'Artaguiette that more than a hundred families would come with him to settle at Illinois and Wabash, if they could have the permission.

⁷³ Bienville, 22 avril, 1734. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A18, 148. Dunn, *Mission of the Wabash*, 329, quotes another letter to the same effect.

but would also deprive the English of a source of considerable trade.⁷⁴

The English were continually increasing the volume of their trade in the Ohio valley and it was doubtless to check these activities that the French were giving so much attention to the Wabash fort. The English had two trading depots on the Ohio from which they were pushing to the southwest and the northwest.⁷⁵ Vincennes was entrusted with the task of keeping the Miami nations safe from the line of these invading rivals.

There were two difficulties in the way of the French plans. Vincennes lacked the trading goods the Indians loved and which they could buy cheaply from the English, and the French soldiers were discontented and undependable. Vincennes complained bitterly that his superiors failed to send him the necessary trading goods and in one letter gave a long list of missing articles.⁷⁶ In the spring of 1735, five men deserted the Wabash post and joined the English.⁷⁷ Desertions from Fort de Chartres were frequent. Bienville declared that the English were trying to win over the Choc-taws and other Indians friendly to the French and form a great Indian confederacy under their control.⁷⁸

The danger was so threatening that Bienville resolved upon war. France and Great Britain were at peace but this did not deter him from forming plans to destroy the Indian friends of the rival nation.

His first objective was the Chickasaws who lived to the south of the Ohio. They had long been intercepting the French who were trading along the Mississippi. They dealt exclusively with the English and their destruction would seriously cripple English trade west of the Alleghanies.

Bienville, as a pretext for war, demanded the surrender of some Natchez Indians who had taken refuge among the

⁷⁴ Bienville, 22 avril, 1734. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A18, 148. Dunn translates this letter but dates it July 27, 1734. *Mission of the Wabash*, 308.

⁷⁵ Bienville, 22 avril, 1734. *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A18, 149.

⁷⁶ Vincennes to Bienville, 22 avril, 1735. He lists shirts, guns, mirrors, combs, hats, powder, "English" cloth, shoes, collars and 2943 pounds of flour as missing from one order. *Ibid.* C13 A20 246.

⁷⁷ Bienville et Salmon, 16 mai, 1735. *Ibid.* 90.

⁷⁸ Report of Bienville, 28 juin, 1736. Quoting Salmon's letter of 7 fevrier, 1736. *Ibid.* C13 A21, 236.

Chickasaws after a disastrous war with the French. This demand was promptly refused and war began.

With an army of Frenchmen and Choctaws, Bienville planned to march north. D'artaguiette with a force composed of soldiers, *habitants*, and Illinois Indians, and Vincennes with his Miamis and a small band of Iroquois, were to march south. The rendezvous was fixed for Ecors à Prudhomme on the tenth of March, 1736.⁷⁹ At the same time, another expedition was to destroy the Shawnees.⁸⁰

For some reason Bienville did not leave Mobile until April 1,⁸¹ and it was the last of May when he reached the Chickasaw villages. D'Artaguiette arrived at Ecors à Prudhomme the last of February or the first of March.⁸² A few days later Vincennes joined him. Here they built a fort of stones and sent scouts to locate Bienville. They returned with no information but some runners came down from the Illinois with news that Bienville had sent word he could not arrive at the rendezvous before the end of April. D'Artaguiette called a council of war. The Indians declared that their provisions were nearly gone and they could not remain long. They proposed to attack a Chickasaw village which they had discovered some distance from the main camp. If they could capture enough provisions, they declared, they would then be willing to await the arrival of Bienville.

D'Artaguiette agreed to this and on the night of March 24, the party stole to within a short distance of the village. Early the next morning the French and Indians made their attack. The fight had hardly started when four or five hundred Chickasaws came to the rescue of the village. The French and the Iroquois and Arkansas Indians stood bravely

⁷⁹ *Relations des Guerre de la Louisiane, 1729-1736. Ibid.* C13 B1. This narrative gives the forces of D'Artaguiette and Vincennes as 21 soldiers, 85 habitants, 38 Iroquois, 28 Arkansas, 100 Illinois, 60 Miamis. Bienville gives the date as 10 or 11 March. Report of Bienville, 28 juin, 1736. *Ibid.* C13 A21, 133.

⁸⁰ Ecors à Prudhomme was located on the east bank of the Mississippi near the modern town of Fulton, Tennessee. It was believed that La Salle built a fort here. It received its name from a Canadian who died there. *Relation de la Louisiane par Penicourt*, 403.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 164.

⁸² *Relation de la Guerre des Chicachas, Ibid.* 164, gives March 4 as the day D'Artaguiette reached Ecors à Prudhomme. *Relations des Guerres de la Louisiane, 1729 et 1736, Ibid.* C13 B1, gives February 28.

but the other Indians ran away. D'Artaguiette was killed in action and possibly St. Ange, junior, his first lieutenant. Vincennes, Father Senat, and several other officers and men were taken prisoners and most of them were burned the same day; one account says "From three in the afternoon until towards midnight."⁸³ The remnant of the French forces was met by some reinforcements with whose assistance they succeeded in getting back to Ecors à Prudhomme on the twenty-ninth.

When Bienville arrived in the Chickasaw country two months later he found no trace of this party which he expected to join him. His scouts reported that the only Europeans of whom they could find any trace were English traders. He retreated without making a serious attack and blamed D'Artaguiette for his ill-success. He, however, suffered a serious loss of prestige from this failure.⁸⁴ It was not long before he was planning another campaign to retrieve his reputation, but the English had already gained a firm foothold on the Ohio.⁸⁵

A son of the old St. Ange who had commanded at the Illinois, and a brother of the lieutenant who was killed at the Chickasaw village, succeeded Vincennes in command of the Wabash post. He was appointed at the solicitation of his father, but Bienville commended him as one who knew the savages and was known by them.⁸⁶ St Ange was promoted in 1749 to the rank of captain with half pay⁸⁷ and

⁸³ Rapport—par le Sr de Rickarville sur la guerre contré les Chicachas. *Ibid.* C13 C4, 202. Rickarville says he was held prisoner by the Chickasaws for eighteen months when he and another Frenchman, assisted to escape by an English trader, of whom there were a number among the Chickasaws, got away. He first reached Georgia and met Oglethorpe who allowed him to go north through the English colonies to Canada.

⁸⁴ Some time after this, February 15, 1737, Bienville wrote a rather lame letter of excuses to the Minister of Marine. *Ibid.* C13 A22, 70.

⁸⁵ Besides the accounts of the Chickasaws war mentioned above, Grandpré, who commanded among the Arkansas and led a body of reinforcements that arrived to cover the retreat, wrote a report dated "24 Xbre, 1728" [1738(?)]. This agrees in detail with the others.

⁸⁶ Bienville, 29 juin, 1736, wrote of him "il commande actuellement un petit poste sur le missoury. Et il y a Longtemps que Mr. D'artaguiette, m'en avoit parlé comme d'un garçon brave et d'un grand merite. *Ibid.* C13 A21. At present, he is commanding a small post on the Missouri, and a long time ago Mr. D'artaguiette spoke to me of him, as being a brave boy and of great merit. Bienville again recommended him on October 30. *Ibid.* D2 C51, 142.

remained commander of the post until it was surrendered to the English.

His position was not an easy one. The Piankeshaws who had lived around the post left it and joined other kinsmen higher up the river at Vermillion.⁸⁸ This left the fort without adequate protection and cost it much of its usefulness as a trading post. It could no longer be regarded as a barrier to the English who were now working down the Ohio. The Cherokees and Chickasaws, apparently under English tutelage, had established their villages on the Ohio.⁸⁹ In view of all these circumstances Bienville soon ordered that the fort be moved to the junction of the two rivers.⁹⁰

For some reason Bienville's orders were not carried out. Perhaps it was because the removal would cost too much, perhaps because the next year the Cherokees and Chickasaws withdrew from their threatening position on the Ohio.⁹¹ Perhaps there was opposition to Bienville's choice of a location, for the site he had selected was low and unprotected. The next year Bienville wrote that Buissonniere, who commanded at Fort de Chartres, would go in the spring of 1739 to find the most suitable place for the new post. In 1740 the location had not yet been decided upon, but Bienville was still planning to send an engineer to examine the ground.⁹² He and Salmon had decided that it was best also to abandon the Illinois fort and build a great stone fort on the Wabash as an effective barrier against the English. They estimated the cost of this at 130,000 livres.⁹³ In 1741 Bienville decided that the mouth of the Cherokee river was the best

⁸⁷ Vaudreuil, 5 juin, 1748. *Ibid.* C13 A32, 254. *Etat general et apostille des officiers à la Louisiane*, 1758. *Ibid.* D2 C, 50.

⁸⁸ Bienville, 21 juin, 1737. *Ibid.* C13 A22, 103.

⁸⁹ Bienville, 5 Xbre, 1736. C13 A21, 219.

⁹⁰ See note 88. "Je luy enverray les ordres pour ce changement qui ne sera pas d'une grande dépense." Salmon, 22 juin, 1737, wrote of the fort, "Je pense qu'Effectivement Il est plus Couteux qu'il n'est utile Cependant Il seroit de Conséquence de le conserver pour Empecher les Anglois de s'y Etablir, ce qu'ils feront certainement si nous l'abandon nons." *Ibid.* C13 A21, 192. I shall send him orders for this change which will not be of a great expense. —I certainly think that it is more costly than it is useful. However, it will be important to keep it in order to prevent the English from settling it, which they will certainly do if we abandon it.

⁹¹ Bienville, 26 avril, 1738. *Ibid.* C13 A23, 48.

⁹² Bienville and Salmon, 24 juin, 1741. *Ibid.* C13 A25.

⁹³ 10 aug., 1739. *Ibid.* C13 A24, 12.

place for the new fort. The Wabash Indians, however, refused to remove there because, they said, the region was subject to inundation. Bienville suspected that Canadian traders were responsible for their objections⁹⁴ which put an end to his schemes.

In 1743 Vaudreuil succeeded Bienville as governor of Louisiana. He planned at once to send traders among all the Indian nations of his province and to do all in his power to make the fur trade flourish. He hoped by this means to increase French influence among the Indians, and thus to weaken the English. Another and very important part of his plan was to establish a fort on the Ohio, to stop the incursions of the Cherokees, and to check the ambition of the English.⁹⁵ This fort was to be of stone and would become the key to the colony. Without it he declared the English would cut the communications between Louisiana and Canada. He hoped to bring down to this fort the Kickapoos and Musquotins who had expressed their willingness to abandon their homes at "*terre haute*".⁹⁶ Vaudreuil further hoped to add to these tribes the Shawnee who, he wrote, had promised Beauharnois, three years before, to settle with them at "*terre haute*".⁹⁷ Soon after he wrote that the Shawnees had actually come down the Ohio and were ready to fall in with his plans.⁹⁸ A year later, however, he had come to distrust them because of the proximity of the English to the Wabash and urged that they be kept at Detroit.⁹⁹

De Bailly, who apparently had the confidence of the government, supported Vaudreuil's proposals by pointing out the many advantages of a post at the mouth of the Ohio. He declared that there the soil was rich, that buffalo were numerous, that it was an excellent place both for trade with the Indians and to hold communication between Louisiana and Canada. He maintained that the French could deliver goods by water to this post much more cheaply than the English

⁹⁴ 30 avril, 1741. *Ibid.* C13 A26.

⁹⁵ Vaudreuil, 6 xbre. 1744. *Ibid.* C13 A28, 245.

⁹⁶ 4 xbre, 1745. *Ibid.* C13 A29, 66. "les ayant trouvés déterminés à quitter leurs anciennes demeures à la terre haute." Having found them, determined to leave their old homes at "terre haute."

⁹⁷ 30 xbre, 1745. *Ibid.* 90.

⁹⁸ 6 fevrier, 1746. *Ibid.* C13 A30, 28.

⁹⁹ 8 avril, 1747. *Ibid.* C13 A31, 52.

could transport them across the mountains.¹⁰⁰ Apparently the king gave some sort of approval to Vaudreuil's plan and permission to establish the new post but no action was taken because the permission was not positive enough.¹⁰¹

During King George's war the English penetrated far into the Wabash country. In 1751 an English hunter was captured only a short distance from the Wabash post.¹⁰² The danger from the English became so great that in 1753 it was planned to send three thousand men to hold the Wabash and Ohio.¹⁰³ Kerlerec, who succeeded Vaudreuil, felt as keenly as his predecessor the danger from English invasions of the Wabash country.¹⁰⁴ He, too, believed that it was necessary to build a fort at the mouth of the Ohio.¹⁰⁵ He declared also that the French must supply more goods for the Indian trade. The Indians were complaining at the lack of attention, while the English had established six posts among the Cherokees.¹⁰⁶ All of these proposals apparently assumed that the Vincennes post should be abandoned and a new fort constructed in a better location.¹⁰⁷ Nothing was done, however, and Vincennes passed intact out of French hands.

Although Post Vincennes was always regarded by the French as a military post, yet it developed a civic life, of which we have only fleeting glimpses. The records of the

¹⁰⁰ M. de Bailly, 1749. *Arc. Nat. Cal.* C13 A33, 219.

¹⁰¹ Vaudreuil, 15 mai, 1751. "Sa Majesté en avoit goûté la proposition—et m'avoit laissé depuis la Liberté d'en former L'établissement que J'ay toujours différé pendant la guerre, pour n'avoir pas eu des ordres assez positives." *Ibid.* C13 A35, 129. His Majesty had approved of the proposition—and since has left me the liberty of forming the establishment which I have always put off during the war because I did not have enough positive orders.

¹⁰² Vaudreuil, 10 xbre, 1751. *Ibid.* 187.

¹⁰³ Kerlerec, 23 juin, 1754...*Ibid.* C13 A38, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Kerlerec, 1 er xbre, 1754. Ils parviendraient "S'ils se rendoient maitres du Ouabache à Couper toute Communication de ce fleuve avec les Illinois et des Illinois avec le Canada." *Ibid.* C13 A39, 35. They will arrive if they make themselves masters of the Wabash to cut off all communication of this river with Illinois and of Illinois with Canada.

¹⁰⁵ Kerlerec, 1 er avril, 1756. *Ibid.* 149.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 181, 190.

¹⁰⁷ Mémoire après, 1755. After suggesting the construction of three forts, one on the Ohio, one on the Cumberland, and one on the Tennessee, the writer continues, "celui de Ste Anne [Ange(é)] deviendra alors inutile mais il pourra estre porté a 40 ou 50 lieues audessus dans la belle Rivière et retabli solidement." *Ibid.* C13 C1, 109. The one of St. Ange (?) will then become useless but it can be moved 40 or 50 leagues above on the Ohio River and re-established firmly.

village were reported lost "through rain, rats and insects," while they were in transport to Illinois after the surrender of the post to the English.¹⁰⁸ The *habitans*, however, sought to maintain their title to their lands by affidavits. One title was derived from a grant by Vincennes and confirmed by Bienville, though no date was given. Haldimand states that St. Ange apparently made about seventy grants during the twenty-eight years he commanded the post. Most of these were confirmed by Kerlerec who was governor of Louisiana from 1753 to 1763. Some, however, were confirmed by Vaudreuil who was governor for ten years preceding Kerlerec. D'abadie who succeeded Kerlerec, confirmed twelve titles.

The earliest dated title was 1749.¹⁰⁹ In 1758, Kerlerec reported that there were eighteen or twenty *habitans* beside the fifty men who composed the garrison. They supplied themselves, according to him, by the cultivation of wheat, corn and tobacco.¹¹⁰ These *habitans* were also much interested in trade. In 1754, they had threatened to abandon the settlement because restrictions had been placed on their trade. They protested, and received the support of Kerlerec.¹¹¹

There were probably seventy families living around Post Vincennes at the time of its surrender to the British.¹¹² Some

¹⁰⁸General Haldemand to Dartmouth, January 5, 1774. C. O. 5, 91, 35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Kerlerec, 12 xbre 1758. "A 6 Lieues plus haut en continuant de Monter Le Ouabache est le fort St. Ange—et 40 hommes de garnison il y a environ 18 our 20 bons habitans qui y font du froment, du tabac, et Du Mahis." *Arc. Nat. Col.* C13 A41, 136. At six leagues farther while continuing to go up the Wabash is Fort Ange—and forty men of the garrison. There are about 18 or 20 good habitans who raise there wheat, tobacco and corn.

¹¹¹ Kerlerec, 17 xbre, 1754. " * * * les habitants Des ilinois Et de L'establissement du fort Vincennes (ou St. Ange) très mécontents Des privilèges traite exclusive que donne M. Duquesnes tant pour le Misouris que pour le fort Saint ange sont dans le dessein D'abandonner l'un Et l'autre de ces deux postes * * * les colons qui les habitent doivent Estre libres du commerce de leurs Denrées Et du fruit de leurs travaux pour les y maintenir." *Ibid.* C13 A38, 118. The inhabitants of the Illinois and of the establishment of Fort Vincennes (or St. Ange) (are) very discontented with the restrictions, excluding what Mr. Duquesnes gives, so much that the Missouri and St. Ange are planning to abandon both these posts * * * that the inhabitants ought to be free in their commerce and enjoy the fruit of their work in order to maintain them there.

¹¹² There were fifty-six heads of families who signed a memorial to General Gage, September 18, 1772 (C. O. 5, 90, 265). As already noted, there were about seventy grants of land made by St. Ange. An enclosure with the letter of General Gage to Hillsborough dated January 6, 1769, stated that at "St Vincents on the Ouabache there were 232 inhabitants." *Ibid.* 87, 75.

of them doubtless left with St. Ange to join their brothers who had crossed the Mississippi. In 1768, there were reported as still remaining 232 inhabitants besides 168 strangers. They possessed ten negro slaves and seventeen Indian slaves. They had two hundred and sixty head of horses, two hundred and ninety-five hogs, and nearly a thousand head of cattle. Their grain in the field was estimated at more than ten thousand bushels, and their tobacco at 36,360 pounds. They were also provided with three mills.¹¹³

Agriculture was probably not the chief means of livelihood of the men settled about the post. One officer reported that "at Post Vincent, there is no other Money passes but Peltry and generally Furrs, but I can Assure Your Excellency that no other person Except Bayntin & Company have given Bond that their Peltry shall be landed at a British Market. And it is certain that their is not one Twentieth part of the Trade in this Country, all the rest must of Consequence go to the French Markets."

He further declared that great quantities of French goods were daily introduced.¹¹⁴

General Gage was alarmed at the great number of strangers who had come to Vincennes. He declared that "Strollers and Vagabonds from Canada, Detroit, Illinois and other Places, have assembled there, to live a lazy kind of Indian Life or taken Shelter there from Justice."¹¹⁵ Apparently numerous reports came to him of French violations of rules regarding trade, for in 1772, he issued a proclamation ordering all the inhabitants of Vincennes and the Wabash country to abandon their homes and to go at once to some of the English colonies.¹¹⁶

The habitants responded in a spirited memorial that they were not vagabonds but peaceful cultivators of the soil. They protested that they had no means of transporting their wives and children to the other colonies, "with only a vain hope of

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 115. *Illinois Historical Collections* XI, 469.

¹¹⁴ Colonel Wilkins to General Gage, Ft. Chartres, 13 September, 1768. *Ibid.* 64.

¹¹⁵ Gage to Hillsborough, Jan. 6, 1769. *Ibid.* 75.

¹¹⁶ 8 April, 1772. Gage gave as his reason that "Ils mènent une vie vagabonde sans Gouvernement et sans Loi, interrompent le cours libre du Commerce, détruisent le Gibier, et causent des Brouilleries infernales dans le Pais." *Ibid.* 90, 281. They lead a vagabond life without government and without law, interrupting the free course of commerce, destroy the game, and cause infernal confusions in the peace.

being received as other subjects." They declared that their land titles were derived from the French king while he reigned over the country, and that they were protected by the treaty of peace. They furthermore denied all the charges that Gage had made against them.¹¹⁷

Gage was apparently impressed by the reply of the inhabitants of Vincennes, for he wrote to Dartmouth that he could not "venture to decide whether they are People settled under legal Titles or Strollers who have taken Land without authority." He believed that there might be some of both kinds.¹¹⁸

Gage soon left for England and Haldemand was left to handle the situation. He informed Dartmouth that the plan of removal was not feasible and that most of the accounts of Vincennes had come "from Jealous and self-interested Traders".¹¹⁹ He wrote to the people of Vincennes that the king would protect their rights under the treaty and would grant them every opportunity to prove title to their lands. Those that appeared just he would confirm.¹²⁰ With this promise, the inhabitants of Vincennes were apparently content. In accordance with the proclamation of 1763 no more grants of land were made¹²¹ and Vincennes doubtless went to sleep until the coming of George Rogers Clark.

The British never established any government of their own at Post Vincennes. When St. Ange left in 1754, the *habitans* apparently chose their own rulers. A. M. Chapart was cammandant in 1768, and St. Marie took the position probably about 1770 and held it for several years. A statement to Haldemand in 1774 was signed by Perthuille "deputé de la part des habitants du poste Vincene", and Phillibert "notaire Royal".¹²²

The British, however, paid little attention to Vincennes and it was not until the expedition of George Rogers Clark that the post became for a brief period again an object of importance.

¹¹⁷ Memorial dated "A Vincennes le 18e 7bre, 1772. *Ibid.* 269 ff.

¹¹⁸ Gage to Dartmouth, May 5, 1773. *Ibid.* 302.

¹¹⁹ Haldemand to Dartmouth, Aug. 4, 1773. *Ibid.* 358.

¹²⁰ Haldemand A Mons de Ste Marie & Autres habitants des environs du Poste de Vincennes. le 2e Aoust, 1773. *Ibid.* 361.

¹²¹ In 1773, there was considerable correspondence between Haldemand and Dartmouth relative to preventing a Mr. Murray from buying land of the Indians, contrary to the king's proclamation. *Ibid.* 397, 407, 424.

¹²² *Ibid.* 91, 40, 41.